

*A*  
**VISION**  
*For*  
**SUPERVISION**

**40 digital cards for building strengths-based,  
solution-focused supervision**

DIGITAL BOOKLET



**Innovative**  
Resources

# Welcome to the Digital Version of *A Vision for Supervision!*

Here is an inspiring and highly practical resource for building strengths-based conversations between supervisors and supervisees.

These conversations focus on what is going well, what we are learning, where we are heading and how our shared strengths can help us get there. Challenges are not ignored; they are fully acknowledged and explored, but rather than becoming bogged down in problems and difficulties, the solution-focused questions contained in this resource are designed to open up possibilities, identify priorities, and support clients to achieve the changes they want.

First published (and still available) as a hard copy card set written by Roger Lowe and Russell Deal, this set of 40 cards is now available in this interactive, user-friendly, digital version.

You can:

- swipe through the 40 digital cards, one at a time
- see both sides of the cards on the screen at once—on the left is the key topic and on the right are four questions to deepen the discussion.
- swipe through a row of thumbnail images at the bottom of the screen
- bookmark/tag images
- add and drag notes to anywhere on the images
- write, scribble or draw on the digital cards—you may want to circle a relevant question or scribble notes in response to the questions



- highlight, draw and write in multiple colours
- take a screen shot and access the image in your photo gallery (you can't print directly from the digital images).

## **Who is this resource for?**

This resource is for anyone who gives or receives supervision—particularly those involved in human services professions. These include counsellors, psychologists, therapists, trainers, mentors, life coaches, health professionals, social workers and anyone who works therapeutically with children, youth, families or communities. Managers and team leaders will also find these digital cards very helpful. This resource is an essential item in the 'toolkits' of educators and others who oversee students of any of the above professions.

## **What is the purpose of this resource?**

*A Vision for Supervision* can be used to help build a strengths-based, solution-focused program of supervision. This resource can assist you to:

- prepare for a supervision session
- create a supervision plan
- dip into when a supervision session 'gets stuck'
- train supervisors
- guide students and other supervisees
- support professional development
- help create and maintain a strengths-based culture within your organisation or practice

- reflect on practice and learning
- find solutions to challenges
- be frank and open about experience
- build confidence
- feel supported and connected to peers and other professionals
- de-brief and help prevent burn out
- explore values, priorities and practice stories
- share ideas and be inspired to try new things
- set goals and next steps
- evaluate progress
- create better services for the benefit of everyone—especially clients!

## **How many cards are in the digital set and how are they arranged?**

There are 40 digital cards in the set. Each card has a key topic on one side and four related questions on the other. The cards are arranged into five colour-coded suits:

**Beginning:** Establishing a relationship (11 cards, green)

**Contexting:** Identifying our accountability (6 cards, coffee)

**Sharpening the focus:** Making each session count (10 cards, orange)

**Widening the Lens:** Mapping our professional development (7 cards, blue/purple)

**Ending:** Celebrating the journey (6 cards, cherry).

The suits provide a general sense of direction for a supervision program (from 'Beginning' to 'Ending'). However, this is not meant to be prescriptive. In any actual supervision dialogue there will be moments of changing direction, pausing to take stock, going back to the beginning, finding interesting detours, and heading down unexpected pathways. Therefore, while the cards appear in a particular order, they can be used flexibly and in any order that makes sense to the people using them.

### **What is 'strengths-based, solution-focused' supervision?**

Strengths-based practice holds that everyone has strengths and resources, and by building and calling upon these we are better able to grow, learn and tackle difficulties. At the heart of the strengths approach is the collaborative sharing of power known as 'power with' rather than a top-down, prescriptive, 'power over' relationship.

Solution-focused practice acknowledges that solutions and possibilities are more likely to arise out of focussing on where we are heading than in going around and around in problems. Questions will focus on what is going well, what is happening when the problem is absent or less dominant, what we value and what is important to us.

In the context of supervision, a strengths-based, solution-focused approach includes:

- identifying and mobilising strengths, possibilities and hopes for the future
- the supervisor and supervisee working collaboratively to design supervision, and share resources and power

- curiosity about possibilities and things to try
- sharing stories, insights and reflection about practice
- a focus on the supervisee's growth and development rather than the supervisor's expertise
- sharing openly and respectfully.

(For a comprehensive text on the strengths approach, including strengths-based supervision, please see *The Strengths Approach* book)

## **What should I consider before using this resource?**

While there are over 160 questions in this resource, they are not exhaustive, nor prescriptive. Supervision can take unexpected pathways and many other questions and topics may occur. Please consider how you will ensure that people are safe and respected, and can be supported if strong emotions arise, as they sometimes do when people are discussing their work and what is important to them. As with all resources it is important to consider such things as the timing, the setting, literacy levels, cultural relevance and privacy—especially when working in groups.



# How do I use the digital cards?

It is ideal if the supervisor and supervisee both have access to a digital version of the cards.

But this is not strictly necessary. Here are some suggested activities for using the digital cards. We hope they inspire many ideas of your own.

## **BEFORE SUPERVISION—for the supervisor**

Before beginning a supervisory relationship, supervisors can use the cards to reflect on their own supervision style and plan for the sessions. Scroll through the cards, noticing the different suits and array of topics and questions.

- Which cards represent topics you tend to emphasise in supervision?
- Which topics don't seem to come up?
- Which questions do you typically ask?
- Which questions do you tend to return to again and again?
- Can you choose cards with topics you are most/least comfortable raising in supervision?
- Can you identify cards with questions you have never asked. Can you say why not? Would you consider incorporating them and if so, how and when?
- Reflecting on your experience as a supervisor so far, which cards represent ways you feel you have been most/least useful to the supervisee?
- Which question would you most/least like a supervisor to ask you?

- In planning the supervision program, can you and the supervisee select cards for the overall structure of the sessions?
- What will you want to cover in the first session (see the ‘Beginning’ suit for some ideas) and in subsequent sessions?
- What will you want to put in place in terms of supervision agreements?
- Are there any topics you want to touch on every session?
- What topics must be covered from the viewpoint of organisational policy or professional code of practice?
- How will you know if supervision is working or not?
- What will be important to cover as you conclude your time together (see the ‘Ending’ suit for some ideas)?

## **BEFORE SUPERVISION—for the supervisee**

Some students or practitioners may be anxious about supervision, especially if they have never experienced it before, or have had negative experiences in the past where they have felt controlled, criticised, labelled or any other aspects of ‘power-over’. *A Vision for Supervision* can play a role in allaying such fears before supervision commences. The supervisee can be invited to scroll through the entire set or perhaps only the ‘Beginning’ suit with such prompts as:

- These digital cards will give you an idea of some of the territory we will cover in our supervision. Would you like to browse through them on your own before we meet for our first session?
- We will address many of the topics in the ‘Beginning’ suit in our first session. You may wish to gently reflect on your responses to some of them ahead of time.

- Are there any 2 or 3 cards in the ‘Beginning’ suit that you feel are particularly important for us to address in our first session?
- Are there any questions or topics not addressed in the ‘Beginning’ suit that you would like us to bring up in our first session?

## **DURING SUPERVISION SESSIONS**

Supervisors and supervisees might decide to use the cards at every session— simply scroll through the thumbnails and select the most relevant topics for that session. Or you might use the cards occasionally (for example, every third or fourth session) to refocus on key themes or to review change. You can also use the cards on an ‘as needs’ basis to help with difficulties or to stimulate new directions. Here are some ideas:

- From the menu of cards, which ones are our priorities right now?
- Is there a particular card that addresses an issue you have been grappling with?
- Which cards and/or questions are going to build on your strengths right now?
- Using a card or a series of cards, can you tell a story about something inspiring/challenging/unexpected/delightful/moving that happened in your practice?
- Which cards shall we flag for discussion at the next session?
- If the supervision process has become predictable, the supervisor or supervisee can pick a card at random by asking one person to close their eyes (or turn their back) and randomly say, ‘Stop!’ as the other swipes through the images. Or you can use a timer that has been set to a chosen interval—5 seconds, 8 seconds etc. Stop on the card when the timer dings.

Whether cards are chosen randomly or deliberately, here are some questions you can ask:

- What does this topic mean to you?
- Have you thought about it before?
- Can you share a story about how this topic relates to your work?
- On a scale of 1-10, how important is this topic to you in your work?
- Is the topic on this card something you find easy or challenging?
- Does this card have any special relevance for your work at the moment?
- Does this topic suggest something you would like to incorporate into your work or into supervision more?
- Of all the colleagues you know, who is really good at doing this in their work?
- Is there anything they do that you could try doing as well?
- If you would like to do more of this in your work, what is one simple thing you could do today or tomorrow?
- How will you notice the effect of doing that? For example, some people like to keep a journal and others prefer to simply watch carefully what happens when they try something new in their work.
- Which card represents a question you think a client would want you to reflect on?
- Which card represents something you would like to do more of/less of?
- How would your practice change if this was the case?

## **BETWEEN SUPERVISION SESSIONS**

Reflecting on the questions between sessions can help build the agenda for subsequent sessions. For a daily reflective prompt, particular cards can be selected and saved to your gallery and then sent to the supervisee. There can be a topic or question of the day to consider and possibly journal about:

- I imagine that between now and next time you will be thinking about our supervision today. Is there a card you would like to reflect on in the days to come?
- Do you keep notes or a journal about your practice? In the time before we meet again, would you be prepared to write a short reflective piece about your learning? Perhaps you might consider using one or more of the cards as a prompt?

## **FOR PEER AND GROUP SUPERVISION**

The cards can provide a lively way for generating conversation with colleagues in group supervision formats. Project the cards onto a large screen and try some of the following activities:

- In the first session, scroll through the cards and ask the group, 'As we plan to establish this supervision group, which of the cards identify key components of the culture you want us to exemplify?'
- In thinking about facilitation, you can ask, 'What if we rotate the leadership of the group? Perhaps if the designated leader brings a story or challenge from their practice, they could also identify a card they would like the group to discuss?'

- For planning subsequent sessions, each participant in the group can note down a topic or question that interests them for any reason. These can be discussed one at a time within the whole group.
- The group may want set up a social media or email exchange based each week around one card.

## WHAT ELSE?

One key, never-to-be-forgotten question from the solution-focused tradition is: 'What else?'

- The *A Vision for Supervision* cards name 40 topics and 160 questions relevant to supervision. What other topics and questions would you want to include?
- Can you identify your top 10 questions from the whole set? Why not create a poster to place near your desk?
- What question has a child asked you that you found intriguing?
- If a spider on the wall could ask a question relevant to this supervision session, what would it be?
- What would a person you admire say about a challenge you brought to supervision today?
- What is the best, worst and funniest thing that has happened to you with a client?
- WHAT ELSE?



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**40 digital cards for building strengths-based,  
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**NOW AVAILABLE DIGITALLY!**

Supervision plays a pivotal role in the professional development of social workers, psychologists, counsellors, managers, health practitioners, life coaches and other human service professionals. At its best, supervision can be a powerful crucible of discovery and learning for both supervisor and practitioner—with the benefits also flowing to clients.

#### ***A VISION FOR SUPERVISION CONSISTS OF:***

- 40 cards arranged in 5 colour-coded suits
- each card with a key topic such as 'Hopes and plans', 'Present situation', 'What worked?' and 'Noticing success'
- each card with 4 questions that go to the core of supervision conversations
- a total of 160 strengths-based questions for building your supervision conversations from start to finish, plus...
- a booklet filled with suggestions for using the cards.

*Swipe through the 40 digital cards, see both sides of the card on the screen at once—write on them, draw on them, highlight and tag them, take screen shots and save them in your gallery.*



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